



University High School Admissions Process Revision

I. USP LANGUAGE

The Unitary Status Plan (USP), section V(5)(a) states:

V. QUALITY OF EDUCATION

5. University High School (“UHS”) Admissions and Retention

- a. By ~~April 1, 2013~~ October 1, 2013, the District shall review and revise the process and procedures that it uses to select students for admission to UHS to ensure that multiple measures for admission are used and that all students have an equitable opportunity to enroll at University High School. In conducting this review, the District shall consult with an expert regarding the use of multiple measures (e.g., essays; characteristics of the student’s school; student’s background, including race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status) for admission to similar programs and shall review best practices used by other school districts in admitting students to similar programs. The District shall consult with the Plaintiffs and the Special Master during the drafting and prior to implementation of the revised admissions procedures. The District shall pilot these admissions procedures for transfer students seeking to enter UHS during the 2013-2014 school year and shall implement the amended procedures for all incoming students in the 2014-2015 school year.*

The original date was changed by agreement of the Parties and Special Master.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USP directs TUSD to improve the academic achievement of African American and Latino students and to ensure that African American and Latino students have equal access to TUSD’s Advanced Learning Experiences (ALEs). ALEs include: Gifted and Talented Programs, Advanced Academic Courses (AP, Pre-AP, Dual-Credit), and University High School (UHS). Historically, UHS has had disproportionately low African American and Latino student populations compared to the rest of the TUSD’s high schools. The revised admissions process is one of several strategies to attempt to increase the percentages of African American and Latino students, including ELL students, enrolling and succeeding at UHS.

TUSD has worked to review and revise the process and procedures that it uses to select students for admission to UHS to ensure that multiple measures for admission are used and that all students have an equitable opportunity to enroll at UHS. This review and revision has included consultation with experts regarding the use of multiple measures, a review of best practices used by other school districts in admitting students to similar programs or schools, and ongoing consultation with the Plaintiffs and Special Master. .

The new proposed admissions process will be applied in a fair, equitable, and race-neutral manner. Although TUSD endeavors to positively impact the percentages of African American and Hispanic enrollment and success at UHS, the proposed application process is designed to be impartial and to offer equity and fairness to all students who apply.

III. DEFINITIONS

Unitary Status Plan (USP)	The USP is a federal-court mandated plan to guide TUSD in its efforts to achieve “unitary status” by eliminating the vestiges of a “dual-system” that operated until the 1950s.
Parties and Special Master	The USP stems from a federal school desegregation court case called <i>Fisher-Mendoza v. TUSD</i> . The parties to the case include TUSD, two plaintiffs groups representing African American and Latino students respectively, and the United States of America, represented by the Department of Justice. There is a court-appointed “Special Master” who oversees implementation, including monitoring and reporting, on behalf of the federal court.
Advanced Learning Experiences (ALEs)	USP Section V(A) identifies TUSD’s GATE Programs, Advanced Academic Courses (AP, Pre-AP, Dual-Credit), and UHS as ALEs. These are areas where there has been historically low African American and Latino student participation in comparison to the percentages of the TUSD as a whole.

IV. BACKGROUND AND TIMELINE

The admissions process was first created through a UHS Advisory Report in 1987. It was revised in 1988, 1989, and 1991 by the UHS Matrix Review Committee. In 1997, the UHS school council adopted revised admissions guidelines. It was revised again in December 2009, and March 2010. The current policy was approved by UHS School Council in April 2011. The purpose of the admissions policy, including the entrance exam, is to recruit and retain a diverse and qualified student population.

In March 2013, the UHS Principal, Ms. Elizabeth Moll, established a UHS Admissions Internal Working Group that included Mike Schmidt, a UHS mathematics teacher for the past twelve years who represents the faculty and serves as a liaison to the Instructional Council, the Assistant Principal Amy Cislak who serves on the UHS Site Council, and Dr. Juliet King, an A&R Research Project Manager, who has managed the school’s admissions for the past four years. With Principal Moll’s retirement at the end of school year 2013-14, the new Principal, Dean Packard, has taken her place. The other members have remained in the Working Group. Additional constituents have been recruited to give input and feedback on the process including: Carmen Hernandez - UHS Learning Support Coordinator; Treya Allen - UHS Career and Technical Counselor; Loraine Blackmon - UHS Office Manager, site council member and UHS Foundation Board member; Terry Adkins - parent and site council member; Matt Ulrich – UHS mathematics teacher and site council member; and Mickey Cronin - student and site council member.

The ALE Director and new principal of UHS were hired on July 1st 2013 and began working with the current working group and expanding the constituent input into the admissions process. The District presented a draft revised process July 20, 2013 for Board, Special Master and Party Review. TUSD staff and UHS, with the inclusion of stakeholders, are working to refine the draft process in time for the 2014-15 admissions period. TUSD will send a revised draft by September 6, 2013, and will continue to consult with the Parties and the Special Master in the refinement of the final plan – set to go to the Governing Board for approval either on September 24, 2013 or, if necessary, on October 8, 2013 prior to implementation. TUSD will send a notification of the possible changes to the new admissions process inserted into the 8th Grade recruitment letter from the ALE Director that was sent September 6, 2013. Notification of any modifications to the current admissions process will be sent to all applicants by October 18, 2013, at the latest.

V. CURRENT ADMISSIONS CRITERIA

Currently, admission to UHS for 9th and 10th grade is based on the following factors: 1) achieving 50 points or more from a combination of points obtained from valuing a student's GPA and entrance test scores, and 2) space availability. Students must have a minimum cumulative GPA average of 3.0 in four core classes – English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science. No weight is given for advanced classes, such as Honors or pre-AP.

The cumulative GPA average is calculated from final grades for the second semester of seventh grade and the first semester of the eighth grade school years. UHS currently administers the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) as an entrance exam. The Cognitive Abilities Test has been used as the primary entrance test for over a decade. It is comprised of three sub-tests – verbal, quantitative and non-verbal. In 2013-14 both UHS and GATE (for grades 3-7) will administer the most recent version – the CogAT Form 7 – to grades 3 through 8.

The CogAT's strength is the fact that it is not an intelligence test, nor a standards-based exam (a common type of assessment for "exam schools") but a well-known and norm-referenced assessment of a student's reasoning abilities skills - skills that are not innate and can be developed over time (Loman, 2002). Students must receive a minimum qualifying composite stanine score of 7 on the test to receive points. The current required minimum test score of a 7 on the Composite Stanine is equivalent to a 77th percentile rank and allows for students that may not score a 7 or higher in each sub test the opportunity to still meet the entrance requirements by obtaining higher scores in one or more sub test categories. Points are awarded for GPA and test scores according to the following tables. A minimum of fifty points and above qualifies a student for admissions to UHS. (See Chart below, page 3)

In the past the Ravens test was used as an additive component to supplement student scores. The Ravens test is now available online which makes it ineffective as a measure. Therefore, it was removed as a component of the admissions process beginning in SY 2012-2013.

GPA	Points
4.00	36
3.99-3.86	34
3.71-3.58	32
3.71-3.58	30
3.57-3.44	28
3.43-3.30	26
3.29-3.15	24
3.14-3.00	22

CogAT Stanine Test Score	Points
9	27
8	24
7	21
0-6	0

2.99-0	0
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VI. REVIEW PROCESS

The UHS Admissions Internal Working Group met several times to discuss the current admissions policy for freshman and to identify areas for review and revision. Early consensus from the working group determined that additional admissions criteria should be objective and well-defined. The initial feeling was that the use of interviews, personal essays and/or staff recommendations could inject subjectivity into the process, and could reduce the transparency and consistency of the admissions.

Since that time, a larger constituent group has had the opportunity to participate in discussions and overview of the admissions process. Multiple experts have been contacted and additional research has been completed as TUSD adjusted to the UHS principal transition and the hiring of an ALE Director. In addition, feedback has been received from the TUSD School Board, the Plaintiffs, and the Special Master. To this end, a more complete outline of a draft admission processes is outlined below.

A. Expert Analysis

Multiple experts were contacted and interviewed regarding best practices, multiple measures, and other related topics.

Experts Contacted:

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Kenneth Bonamo
(Principal, Scarsdale High School, Scarsdale, NY) | September 5, 2013 |
| 2. Dr. Chester Finn (co-author, Exam Schools) | August 22, 2013 |
| 3. Jeannie Franklin
(Director, Division of Consortia Choice and Application,
Montgomery County Public Schools) | Pending (September 9, 2013) |
| 4. Dr. Angela Hockett (co-author, Exam Schools) | August 21, 2013 |
| 5. Dr. Lannie Kanevsky at the Simon Fraser University
(expertise in Academic Resiliency/Motivation scales) | July 2, 2013 |
| 6. Kelly Lofgren
(Admissions Coordinator, Illinois Mathematics & Science
Academy [IMSA], Aurora, Illinois) | August 16, 2013 (email) |
| 7. Dr. Tonya Moon, University of Virginia
(expertise in Gifted Education and Academic Diversity) | August 22, 2013 |

See Appendix A and AA for summaries of interviews.

See Appendix K for expert reports

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In discussions with these multiple experts regarding analysis of current “Exam School” best practices, the general consensus is that the use of multiple and varied methods of analyzing students for the basis of admissions yields a more complete picture of the students and is deemed a best practice. When looking at what factors most impact the diversity of the schools, feedback was given that expanding the school, improving recruitment, and improving feeder pattern educational practices have the greatest impact on increasing the diversity of the school.

In these endeavors UHS has been making strides for the past few years. Recruitment efforts have included steadily increasing the amount and accuracy of information being distributed about UHS, and this has resulted in an increase in the number of students entering UHS to over 300 in the current freshman class. During this same time period, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of Hispanic students attending UHS, although the same increase was not seen for African American students. Current size restrictions limit the number of students who are able to attend UHS; given the increase in students qualifying for admission to UHS, this is a concern. Further, UHS has hosted two events with feeder schools to work on vertical articulation of curriculum to help feeder schools prepare students for the rigors of UHS.

See Appendix B for Hispanic and African American student enrollment data.

B. Exam Schools - Current Practice

Various exam school web sites were analyzed, application packets investigated, and personnel contacted, when possible, for an understanding of current practices. In general, these schools used multiple measures and supported a more holistic approach to the admission process.

Exam Schools Reviewed:

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|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy (IMSA) | Aurora, IL |
| 2. Thomas Jefferson High School for Math and Technology | Alexandria, VA |
| 3. Liberal Arts and Science Academy High School | Austin, TX |

See Appendix C for detailed information on each school; Appendix D for Review of Top-Rated AP High Schools; Appendix E for Review of Exam Schools

VII. PROPOSED ADMISSIONS PROCESS REVISION

In discussions with experts and with those involved in the development of a quality admissions policy, it has become clear that it is best practice to work on a process for implementation that includes the use of multiple measures and a continuous evaluation of this implementation. After meeting with experts and working with constituent groups, we would like to propose the following multi-year process for implementation and analysis of UHS admissions, in collaboration with the Plaintiffs and the Court. This process will allow for:

- 1) flexibility in meeting admission timelines while developing multiple criteria and
- 2) using a varied approach to admissions at UHS, both for the 2014-15 SY and in the future.

The development of a process for implementation and evaluation of admissions, instead of a static policy, will allow all parties the opportunity to better understand how the different proposed changes impact admissions. The outline below looks at a two-year process; however, we would also like the process to be that of continual analysis and improvement over time. This would include analysis of other testing in the future, including the use of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) as an option.

YEAR 1 (for students applying in 2013-14 to enroll in 2014-15) PILOT ADMISSIONS PROCESS

A. Freshman

1. Eighth grade students that apply for admissions for the 2014-15 school year will complete a *pilot admissions process*.
 - a. Students will take the Cognitive Abilities test (CogAT) – Form 7.
 - b. Testing sites will be arranged for all middle schools that have applicants on site.
 - c. UHS will have two alternative testing dates on site for any student unable to test at their home school or students from outside the district.
 - d. A minimum composite score of 7 will qualify students for points towards admission.
2. GPA
 - a. A student's cumulative grade point average (GPA) is calculated from final grades for the second semester of seventh grade and the first semester of the eighth grade school years.
 - b. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 in four core classes – English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science will qualify students for points towards admission. No weight is given for advanced classes, such as Honors or pre-AP.

3. Academic Motivation Test (CAIMI OR OTHER RELEVANT MEASURES)*
 - a. All current 8th grade students will pilot a motivation test (CAIMI OR OTHER RELEVANT MEASURES) during the Fall of 2013.
 - b. All non-district students that have applied and taken the CogAT will pilot a motivation test.

4. Point Structure: Remains. For the first-year pilot, the motivation test will be used as additive (see below). After the first year, we will look at the motivation test scores and reevaluate the weight/point distribution at that time.

Given the results using the current point structure and awarding bonus points from the use of an additional assessment appear to increase the percentage of African American and Hispanic students that could be admitted to the school. *See Appendix J*

**Dr. Lannie Kanevsky recommended the Children's Academic Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (CAIMI OR OTHER RELEVANT MEASURES).*

B. Sophomores

1. Freshman students that apply for admissions for the 2014-15 school year will complete a pilot admissions process.

2. Students will take the Cognitive Abilities test (CogAT).
 - a. UHS will have testing on site.
 - b. A minimum composite score of 7 will qualify students for points towards admission.

3. Transcript analysis/GPA
 - a. A rubric will be developed to weight GPA and transcript analysis that yields higher values for higher GPA and honors/advanced coursework. For example, a student could be given an additional point for taking an advanced level class, regardless of the grade earned.
 - b. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 un-weighted scale in four core classes – English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science will qualify students for points towards admission.

- c. Students must be on track to graduate with a UHS diploma. (Appendix E)
4. Academic Motivation Test (CAIMI OR OTHER RELEVANT MEASURES): All applicants will pilot the CAIMI OR OTHER RELEVANT MEASURES.
5. Non-Cognitive Admissions Component (Sedlacek and Brooks): Questions would be developed for short answer responses that would be given at the same time as the Motivation assessment. These questions would be related to the seven non-cognitive variables from Sedlacek and Brooks. *See Appendices F and G for information and examples*
6. Teacher Evaluation: Students will submit teacher recommendations similar to the exemplar used by IMSA. *See Appendix H for examples of teacher evaluation form.*
7. Rubrics will be developed for the non-cognitive admission component and teacher recommendations. The development of the rubrics will be done in consultation with outside experts. *See Appendix I for example of rubric.* An extensive evaluation of each admission component will be conducted to analyze the effectiveness, efficiency, and impact on actual admissions.

C. Juniors and Seniors

A UHS diploma carries with it a level of expectation and signifies success in an extremely rigorous and challenging academic setting. The criteria for prospective Junior and Senior Admissions reflect the preparation of current UHS students at this level. Any admissions of Juniors and Seniors is subject to space availability. There may be times when no Junior or Senior students will be admitted. If there are openings and applications are accepted, the following criteria will be piloted.

Students must:

1. be on track to graduate with a UHS diploma. (Appendix E)
2. demonstrate successful performance on the State's standardized test requirements for graduation.
3. have earned an Exceeds on the AIMS or the equivalent ratings on future testing on two of the subject tests, reading, writing and mathematics.
4. GPA of 3.0 or higher in all previous coursework.
5. score of 167 or higher on the PSAT or a score of 1670 or higher on the SAT.

YEAR 2 (for students applying in 2014-15 to enroll in 2015-16)

The Year Two process is an extension of the pilot process that was used for sophomore students in Year One. Based on an extensive evaluation of the Year One process, including analysis of each component and their effectiveness and efficiency, the functioning components of the list below will be used.

A. Freshman and Sophomores

1. All eighth and ninth grade applicants will be given the CogAT to determine eligibility for UHS admissions for the 2015-16 school year. A minimum composite score of 7 will qualify students for points towards admission.
2. Transcript analysis/GPA
 - a. A rubric will be developed to weight GPA and transcript analysis that yields higher values for higher GPA and honors/advanced coursework. For example, a student could be given an additional point for taking an advanced level class, regardless of the grade earned.
 - b. A minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 un-weighted scale in four core classes – English, Social Studies, Mathematics, and Science will qualify students for points towards admission.
3. Academic Motivation Test (CAIMI OR OTHER RELEVANT MESURES): All eighth and ninth grade applicants will take the CAIMI OR OTHER RELEVANT MESURES.
4. Non-Cognitive Admissions Component (Sedlacek and Brooks): Questions would be developed for short answer responses and would be given at the same time as the Motivation assessment. These questions would be related to the seven non-cognitive variables from Sedlacek and Brooks. *See Appendix F.*
5. Teacher Evaluation: Students will submit teacher evaluations similar to the exemplar used by IMSA. *See Appendix H.*

B. Juniors and Seniors

See Year 1

VIII. REVIEW

UHS will create a committee that will review the process and results of admissions yearly. Changes will be considered for the next admissions cycle.

IX. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

While recruitment and retention are not part of this Admissions Plan, they are a significant component in UHS's work in increasing and maintaining the diversity of the campus. On-going efforts are in place to improve recruitment of eligible students, as are the development and improvement of student support systems, many of which are already in place. Data will be used to analyze recruitment efforts, retention of students, and their successful completion of the UHS curriculum.

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